



## California-Bred Champions

by DEBRA GINSBURG

His very name cries out to horse-players to take him seriously, but two of his three stakes wins last year paid off at very generous odds. However, when members of the CTBA were asked to mark their ballots for the state's juvenile champion of 2003, they voted for this consistent son of Benchmark who rarely got the respect he deserved on the racetrack.

Bred by Mary Caldwell, widow of legendary auctioneer Tom Caldwell, Don'tsellmeshort was precocious enough to launch his racing career in early May. Carrying his breeder's silks and jockey Pat Valenzuela, he debuted in a 4 1/2-furlong maiden contest for California-breds at Hollywood Park on May 7 and ran well to finish second.

It was an auspicious beginning for the youngster who was slated to be sold at the Barretts May Two-Year-Old Sale the following week. Cecil Peacock liked the fact the colt already had some racing experience and bought him for \$75,000. Sent to trainer Dan Hendricks, Don'tsellmeshort broke his maiden by 2 1/2 lengths a week later and has never been worse than fourth in eight subsequent outings.

Favored in Hollywood's Haggin Stakes on June 21, Don'tsellmeshort was only able to finish fourth behind fellow Cal-bred Stalking Tiger and eventual Hollywood Juvenile Championship victor Perfect Moon. He made amends in his next outing, the Graduation Stakes against Cal-breds at Del Mar on July 30. Sent off at 8-1 odds, he broke quickly under Valenzuela and never looked back, beating favored Stalking Tiger by three lengths. The colt's sterling effort even surprised his trainer.

"I didn't think he'd out-break those horses and still be

# Don'tsellmeshort



**1st Don'tsellmeshort**

**2nd Stalking Tiger**

**3rd Dave the Dude**



### Don'tsellmeshort, gr./ro.c., 03.01.01

Benchmark—Miss Soft Sell, by Siyah Kalem

Breeder: Mary H. Caldwell

Owner: Cecil N. Peacock

	Age	Sts	1st (SW)	2nd	3rd	Earnings
2003	2	8	4 (3)	2	1	\$294,395

three lengths in front at the finish," Hendricks said.

Bypassing the rich Del Mar Futurity to take on Cal-breds again in the I'm Smokin Stakes, Don'tsellmeshort broke on top and set quick early fractions only to lose by a nose to Dave the Dude. He was then favored to become the first Cal-bred to capture the Barretts Juvenile at Fairplex Park. The colt did just that, winning by 1 1/4 lengths and adding another \$68,282 to his coffers to push his earnings past \$200,000.

Don'tsellmeshort ran third in the California Cup Juvenile in his first start at 1 1/16 miles, but it was a much better race than it first appeared. Breaking from the one hole, the colt got squeezed early and had to take the long route home. The fact that he was still able to finish in the money despite these difficulties, earned him a ton of respect from his trainer.

The colt's troubled trip at Cal Cup XIV was not lost on bettors who allowed him to go off at 13-1 in the open division of the California Breeders' Champion Stakes on Dec. 26. Shouldering top weight of 123 pounds, Don'tsellmeshort stalked the early pace and took charge at the head of the lane to draw away by 1 1/2 lengths.

Don'tsellmeshort made his sophomore bow in the \$250,000 NATC Dash as part of Sunshine Millions II at Santa Anita Park on Jan. 24, a race that his connections had been shooting for since last fall. Once again, he had to come up on the far outside and just missed third in a blanket finish of four horses straining for the wire together. The \$20,000 he earned for fourth pushed his bankroll past \$300,000.

"He's more than just a sprinter," Hendricks said. "He's shown a lot of versatility out there. He can rate and come from behind. He doesn't always need to be on the lead."